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Attitude of Swiss citizens towards the energy strategy 2050

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climate funding receives more public support if it flows to efficient governments, funding decisions are made jointly by donor and recipient countries, funding is used both for mitigation and adaptation, and other donor countries contribute a large share. Contrary to what one might expect, climate change damage levels, income, and emissions in/ of potential recipient countries have no significant effect on public support. These findings suggest that finance mechanisms that focus purely on compensating developing countries, without contributing to the global public good of mitigation, will find it hard to garner public support (Gampfer et al., 2014).

Attractive carbon offsetting

A recent study by Kevin Anderson and Thomas Bernauer focuses on carbon offsetting. Since many rich countries are finding it very difficult to achieve even their self-selected reduction targets, carbon offsetting becomes an attractive option. Carbon offsetting is a market mechanism that tends to make GHG reduction more cost-efficient. Most often, it is used in the context of cap-and-trade (emissions trading) systems. One of the most fundamental policy-design choices in government-led climate change mitigation is whether GHG emissions should be reduced at their source (say within a given firm or sector), or whether carbon offsetting domestically and internationally (funding the equivalent amount of emission reductions elsewhere) should be possible. Since public opinion imposes important constraints on such policy choices Anderson and Bernauer investigate how arguments regarding carbon offsetting's economic efficiency, effectiveness, and ethicality, which have been key points in the public debate on carbon offsetting, impact citizens' preferences.

Effectiveness is pivotal

Based on online framing experiment in the United States they find that citizens' support for international offsetting is stronger and support for reductions at the source is weaker when considerations of economic efficiency gains are at the

forefront. Support for offsetting declines when individuals are confronted with arguments about (in)effectiveness and ethicality of offsetting. These findings suggest that public support for carbon offsetting, which already is substantial, could still be enhanced via more information on efficiency gains and via measures addressing additional/ effectiveness concerns (Anderson and Bernauer). While this study focuses on government mandated carbon offsetting, the latter can also take place on a voluntary basis. Anderson, Bernauer, and Huber are currently implementing a field experiment on voluntary carbon offsetting among car-owners in the canton of Zurich. The idea is to find out what motivates or discourages people to voluntarily mitigate their GHG footprint.

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Thomas Bernauer is a Professor of Political Science at ETH Zurich. He obtained his PhD from the University of Zurich. After research at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in Geneva, he was a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard University and a senior lecturer at the University of Zurich. In his research and teaching Thomas Bernauer focuses on how environmental, economic, and security problems that extend beyond national borders can or could be solved.

Attitude of Swiss Citizens towards the Energy Strategy 2050

Thomas Kurer (CIS, UZH) and
Thomas Widmer (CIS, UZH)

On 8 March 2015, the Swiss electorate voted on the first popular initiative of the relatively recent Green Liberal Party (GLP). The initiators suggested replacing the existing value added tax by a novel "energy tax." The claimed that strengthening the so-called "polluter pays principle" would help promote renewable energy and allow for a climate-friendly phasing out of nuclear energy. However, the Swiss electorate rejected the introduction of an energy tax in an unmistakably clear fashion: 92 percent of the participants voted against the initiative. Only once in the history of Swiss popular initiatives has an initiative been rejected more clearly – which was nearly hundred years ago (initiative on grain supply in 1929, 97.3% votes against!)

Subsequent to the massive rejection of the energy initiative, voices were raised claiming that the defeat in the vote must be interpreted as a general rejection of the energy policy pursued by the Federal Council. In the aftermath of the nuclear disaster at Fukushima in 2011, the Federal Council had developed the "Energy Strategy 2050" to ensure that the phasing out of nuclear energy would take place in an orderly manner. Some voices thereupon asserted that the defeat in the vote that the GLP had suffered equalled a "collateral damage for the energy transition" in



Campaign poster by the Swiss Green Liberal Party for the popular initiative on 8 March 2015 about the introduction of an energy tax. (illustration: pad)

general. We took this interpretation as a reason to supplement the regular follow-up survey of the electorate (so called VOX-Analyse) with a specific question on the attitude of those surveyed towards the Energy Strategy 2050, in order to underpin the debate with numbers.

Nearly 1500 people were interviewed by telephone regarding their general attitude towards the Energy Strategy 2050. A majority of the population

generally supports the energy policy approach taken by the Federal Council. 56.6 percent of respondents either strongly or somewhat agree with the Energy Strategy 2050. A fifth of the respondents express skeptical views and only 8.2 percent strictly reject the strategy. The remaining 15.6 percent are undecided or did not answer the question, which is not surprising considering the complexity of the matter.

Table 1: General attitude towards Energy Strategy 2050

	number	percent	cum. percent
strongly agree	215	13.8	13.8
somewhat agree	666	42.8	56.6
somewhat disagree	305	19.6	76.3
strongly disagree	127	8.2	84.4
undecided	242	15.6	100.0
Total	1556	100	

* Statements weighted according to language region.
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¹ <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/va/19290303/>

Unsinnig und teuer!



Energie-Steuer
NEIN

Campaign poster by a cross-party committee against the popular initiative of 8 March 2015 about the introduction of an energy tax. (illustration: pad)

In view of the vote on energy tax our interest focuses mainly on the approval of the Energy Strategy 2050 amongst nay voters. This distribution provides information on how much the rejection of this specific initiative can be interpreted as a general rejection of the long-term Energy Strategy 2050.

Majority backs Federal Council

Naturally, the Energy Strategy 2050 is more appealing to supporters of the introduction of an energy tax than to people who rejected the initiative. However, there is a majority on both sides of the electorate in support of the energy policy course of the Federal Council. Nearly 56 percent of nay voters generally agree with the Energy Strategy 2050, even though they opposed the initiative on the energy tax. Therefore, the attitude of nay voters towards the energy policy aim of Switzerland does not

substantially differ from the country's average attitude.

These findings support a differentiated interpretation of the initiative outcome of 8 March 2015. A clear majority of the population supports the medium- and long-term energy policy objectives of the Federal Council that are included in the Energy Strategy 2050. However, the nay voters strongly opposed the idea of replacing the value added tax with an energy tax. In fact, this proposal was widely regarded as a too strong and risky intervention for the – in general – well-functioning Swiss tax system.

In the eyes of the respondents, the steering effect of the energy tax would lead, in medium-term, to federal budget deficits or to exponentially rising energy prices. In this context, the voters chose to reject the initiative. The rejection, however,

is not tantamount to a fundamental change of the energy policy direction of the Federal Council. Despite the fizzling out of the "Fukushima effect" the long-term goal of the energy transition is supported by the majority.



Thomas Kurer is a PhD student at CIS in the research project "Years of Turmoil: The Political Consequences of the Financial and Economic Crisis in Europe" by Prof. Silja Häusermann. He completed an MA in Political Science (major) and Economy (minor) at the University of Zurich and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.



Thomas Widmer has been a Professor at the Department of Political Science of Zurich University since 2014. He studied political science, history and international law at the University of Zurich, where he earned his PhD in political science. His research focuses on evaluation. He was, among others, a member of the Swiss Evaluation Society, the European Evaluation Society.

Table 2: General attitude towards Energy Strategy 2050 according to vote
Attitude towards Energy Strategy 2050

Vote		agree	undecided	disagree	total
No	n	497	108	290	896
	%	55.5	12.1	32.4	100
Yes	n	56	9	14	79
	%	70.8	11.3	17.8	100
Total	n	553	117	304	975
	%	56.7	12.0	31.2	100

* Statements weighted according to language region

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Fueling Violence – New Evidence for the Oil Curse

Philipp Hunziker (CIS)

The public discourse on the sustainability of fossil fuels revolves mainly around their global environmental impact. The societal costs of global oil consumption may be similarly grave, as a large body of literature suggests. In particular, there is considerable statistical evidence in favor of an "oil-conflict" link: over the last decades, oil- and gas-producing states were significantly more likely to experience an outbreak of civil war than other countries.

While the existence of this "oil curse" is widely accepted, there is little consensus about why and under which conditions oil increases the risk of violence. Yet, identifying the relevant mechanisms is of key importance in order to prevent – or at least mitigate – the apparently dire political consequences of petroleum extraction.

Funds for rebels

One potential explanation for the oil-conflict link is that access to oil fields provides prospective rebels with the opportunity to fund their operations. Aspiring insurgents may steal oil and extort producers, thus acquiring the necessary "start-up" funds to buy weapons, recruit fighters,

ISIL is having difficulties keeping its oil fields operational due to a lack of engineers.

and effectively challenge the state. Thus, oil may assume a similar role as "blood diamonds" that gained notoriety when it was discovered that rebel organizations in various African countries have funded their operations by exporting gemstones.

This "funding" argument has recently attracted attention in the context of the ISIL insurgency in Syria and Iraq. Media have widely reported that the Islamist group is financing its



Smoke emerging from Iraq's largest oil refinery in Baiji after an attack by ISIL affiliates on June 17, 2014. (photo: USGS/NASA Landsat)

operations by selling petroleum from captured oil fields, prompting some to call the organization the "wealthiest terrorist group in history."

Oil production too challenging

However, while evidence of this type indicates that oil revenue may indeed benefit rebel organizations in certain settings, it is doubtful whether this "funding" mechanism is able to explain the oil-conflict link. In fact, instances where insurgents benefit directly from oil revenue are relatively rare. Outside the current war in Syria and Iraq, large-scale oil theft by rebels has only been reported in the Niger Delta and Colombia. A likely explanation for the surprising lack of oil-fueled insurgents is that the extraction, refinement, and transport of hydrocarbon fuels exceed the logistical and political capabilities of most rebel organizations.

Maintaining oil production facilities requires trained personnel that rebel groups will find difficult to attract.